

'I just sat on the bench in a daze', says Barry Darvill

City of Norwich School Old Boys 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0

"THE greatest day of our lives", that's how Old Boys' captain Dave Turner summed up this unbelievable victory over Wycombe Wanderers. Why unbelievable? Because the Wanderers completely dominated the match from start to finish, yet somehow still failed to win this F.A. Amateur Cup first round tie.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Wycombe had 98 per cent of the play. But once in front of goal the forwards just missed chance after chance. In fact some of the finishing at times was woeful.

Nevertheless the Old Boys deserve full credit for the way in which they fought. What they lacked in skill they more than made up for with sheer guts and determination.

But a true reflection of this one-sided game would have been a 6-0 win in favour of Wycombe. Old Boys' goalkeeper Whitehead and centre-half Pointer saved their side on a number of occasions with timely interceptions.

A dejected Barry Darvill commented: "What can you say. I just don't know how to explain it. I have never seen anything like it, the finishing was terrible. I would have scored a hat-trick out there. I just sat on the bench in a daze. I really can't fathom it out".

WARM RECEPTION

On a damp, overcast afternoon the 2,003 crowd, packed closely round the ground, gave both teams a warm reception. There was little hint of the shock which was about to materialise as Wycombe moved swiftly into the attack.

Samuels headed on an Eyres cross and Horseman, streaking past Turner, scooped the ball over the bar. A goal in the first minute would have put Wycombe in an unassailable position but it was not to be. The Wanderers did not seem overawed by the closeness of the crowd or the strange surroundings.

If anything they appeared more composed than the Old Boys. Merrick won a corner and the 'keeper rather nervously finger-tipped the kick over the bar.

At this stage of the match Whitehead looked very unsure with his handling, especially when dealing with high crosses. It was an ironic twist of fate that in the later stages he was to be one of the Old Boys' heroes.

Maskell had his first touch of the ball as he confidently snatched a cross off Phillips' head. The Old Boys' most dangerous player was six-foot outside-left Peter Taylor, who made several strong runs, once gliding past four defenders. If the Old Boys were to win this

match, which seemed quite out of the question, Taylor would be the man to provide the inspiration.

After a spell of relentless Wycombe pressure Samuels headed narrowly over and it appeared only a matter of time before Wanderers finally commenced the expected goal-rush.

Wycombe's 4-2-4 system was not working as smoothly as usual mainly because Barry Baker failed to stamp his personality on the game in mid-field.

However, the openings were still being carved out and Gale shot wide from 15 yards. The Old Boys mounted few attacks simply relying on Taylor's solo breaks.

They were tactically immature, being unable to beat an offside trap and relied on the old-fashioned type of game, chasing every ball. The Old Boys can argue with conviction that the old tactics work, for with all Wycombe's domination it was the Old Boys who got the vital goal.

ANXIETY

After 15 minutes Wycombe began to show the first sign of anxiety in not being able to put the finishing touch to their approach work.

Worley streaked down the wing and his low cross reached Horseman. Tony's drive was blocked by Whitehead's outstretched right foot and the rebound came back to Horseman who, with the goal at his mercy, steered the ball wide.

It was all one-way traffic as Wycombe surged forward keeping the Old Boys penned in their own half with a continual bombardment of the goal area. A beautiful defence splitting pass from Baker put Worley through but his shot cannoned off the outside of the right hand upright to safety.

Shortly before the break Maskell had his first real shot to save as McBride and Phillips combined neatly to provide Linstead with the opening to fire straight at the Wanderers' keeper.

Play quickly switched to the other end and Samuels saw his snap 20-yard drive well saved by Whitehead, and as Merrick closed in on the loose ball, right-back McManus sprinted across to hammer the ball clear out of the ground. The first half finished on a note of Wycombe dominance as Samuels saw his header brilliantly flicked over by Whitehead.

As the players trooped off it seemed hard to believe that the Old Boys, who had practically spent the whole of the 45 minutes on the defensive, were still on level terms.

Within two minutes of the restart Beck fell awkwardly pursuing the quick-silver Taylor and pulled a hamstring. Young defender Micky Calvert was pitched into the fray with Wanderers still, relentlessly, coming forward.

The Old Boys survived another Wycombe onslaught in the 55th minute. Horseman slipped past a defender and gave Samuels the opportunity to shoot past Whitehead, but Turner was on the line to volley clear. Worley gathered the rebound and fired in a vicious swerving shot which had Whitehead leaping across his goal to tip round.

A clash of heads between Merrick and Pointer ended with the Old Boys centre-half being led from the field, with blood spurting from a five-inch gash. It was a tragic blow for the Old Boys because Pointer had been the king-pin of a tremendous rearguard action. But they shuffled their ranks well with Barry Varnon replacing the injured Pointer.

FRUSTRATION

As the game progressed it became painfully obvious that one goal might swing the issue. One could detect a note of frustration and desperation creeping into the Wycombe team.

The Old Boys suddenly scored in the 66th minute. Taylor made one of his usual breaks but this time had two players in support. His swerving cross was missed by Phillips, and Maskell could only push the ball out. Linstead, moving in, gleefully smashed the rebound into the net, amid jubilant scenes from the crowd.

It seemed almost impossible to comprehend that the Old Boys had scored — it appeared as though they could hardly believe it themselves!

As the match entered its last stage Wycombe stepped up the tempo and the Old Boys called upon all their resources by pulling 11 men back for a Worley corner.

From the kick Merrick saw his effort hammered off the line and Whitehead was hurt diving into a group of players in a desperate attempt to retrieve the ball.

The atmosphere was electric as Wycombe pushed themselves even harder. One had to admire the guts of the Old Boys which was typified by one single act from centre-forward Phillips.

For a Horseman free-kick on the edge of the area, Phillips threw himself in the way of the shot, successfully blocking the effort but knocking himself out in the process.

No one could not accuse the Wycombe players of putting a hundred per cent effort into this match. They were still far from finished as Worley escaped the attentions of Ellis and with Horseman waiting for the cross, Whitehead leaped magnificently from his goal, to snatch the ball out of the air.

Even in injury time Wycombe forged ahead. From a Horseman cross Samuels fired in from close range but, inevitably Whitehead was there again.

As the final whistle blew the crowd gave the Old Boys a terrific ovation which they fully deserved, but if ever there was a travesty of justice committed on the football field this must have surely been it.

Wycombe: J. Maskell; J. Beck (M. Calvert), V. Faulkner, I. Rundle, P. Eyres; B. Baker, C. Gale; L. Morley, K. Samuels, A. Horseman, L. Merrick. Norwich Old Boys: R. Whitehead; C. McManus, A. Ellis; J. Revell, R. Pointer (B. Varnon), D. Turner, D. Linstead, T. McBride, T. Phillips, T. Goreham, P. Taylor.

C.N.S.O.B.U. 1 Wycombe 0

WYCOMBE WERE bundled out of the Amateur Cup by the sheer enthusiasm of the City of Norwich O.B.U.

They reached the second round of the competition for the first time because of the opportunism of Dave Linstead in the 68th minute. Goal-keeper John Maskell could only push out a fierce cross from Ted Phillips and winger Linstead drove home.

A stronger and better-knit Wycombe let themselves down by missing chances before the interval and Tony Horseman missed the easiest chance of all.

Rod Whitehead, in the Norwich goal, put up a rousing performance when Wycombe made frantic late efforts and he made a particularly fine diving save from Charlie Gale.

Reg Pointer, former Norwich City amateur centre half, now with the Old Boys, went to hospital with a gashed head half an hour from the end.